
Environment Committee

HB 1135

Brief Description: Regarding refrigerants for motor vehicles.

Sponsors: Representatives Finn, Armstrong and Upthegrove.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits motor vehicle air conditioning equipment from containing any refrigerant that is toxic or flammable, unless the refrigerant is allowed under rules adopted by the Department of Ecology.
- Removes the authority of the Washington State Patrol to adopt safety requirements and regulations applicable to motor vehicle air conditioning equipment.

Hearing Date: 1/20/11

Staff: Courtney Barnes (786-7194).

Background:

Federal Significant New Alternatives Policy.

The Significant New Alternatives Policy (SNAP) program is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) program to evaluate and regulate substitutes for ozone-depleting chemicals that are being phased out under the stratospheric ozone protection provisions of the federal Clean Air Act. Under the federal Clean Air Act, the EPA is authorized to identify and publish lists of acceptable and unacceptable substitutes for class I or class II ozone-depleting substances [42 U.S.C. 7671k(c)]. Pursuant to its authority under the SNAP, the EPA has published a list of safe alternative motor vehicle air conditioning substances that are non ozone-depleting chemicals.

Motor Vehicle Air Conditioning Equipment.

"Air conditioning equipment" is defined in statute as mechanical vapor compression refrigeration equipment that is used to cool the driver or passenger compartment of any motor vehicle.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Currently, it is illegal for air conditioning equipment to contain any refrigerant that is toxic or flammable, unless the refrigerant is included in the list published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a safe alternative motor vehicle air conditioning substitute for chlorofluorocarbon-12 [RCW 46.37.470(2)]. The Washington State Patrol may adopt and enforce safety requirements and regulations (applicable to motor vehicle air conditioning equipment) which must correlate with and conform to the current recommended practice or standard approved by the Society of Automotive Engineers [RCW 46.37.470(3)].

The Department of Ecology.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, the states have the option to implement either federal motor vehicle emission standards or California motor vehicle emissions standards for passenger cars, light duty trucks, and medium duty passenger vehicles. The Legislature has adopted California motor vehicle emissions standards and authorized the Department of Ecology (Department) to adopt rules to implement these emissions standards [RCW 70.120A.010].

Summary of Bill:

Air conditioning equipment may not contain any refrigerant that is toxic or flammable, unless the refrigerant is allowed under motor vehicle emission standards rules adopted by the Department (instead of the list published by the EPA for safe alternative motor vehicle air conditioning substitutes for chlorofluorocarbon-12).

The provision allowing the Washington State Patrol to adopt safety requirements and regulations applicable to motor vehicle air conditioning equipment is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.